

There's No Love Like a Parent's

Chapter 1

Ghiaccio was walking with a pursed mouth along a cobblestone road that sloped slightly uphill. In his right hand, he carried several paper bags. Inside them were bottles of red wine, cheaper than mineral water, as well as Parmesan cheese and dried raisins. The canned mackerel he bought at the imported goods store was due to Formaggio's advice: "It's surprisingly good, especially when paired with cheap red wine – it's the best!"

The time was just past two in the afternoon, a pleasant time for a nap. However, he wasn't planning to enjoy a leisurely holiday. These items were merely accompaniments for a casual visit.

On the fourth floor of a retro, brick-style apartment, he headed to the room at the far end of the corridor. He opened the door with the ease of someone returning to their own home. The rustling of the paper bags caught the attention of a figure inside the room, who turned around. But upon recognizing Ghiaccio, the figure relaxed and gave him an exasperated look.

"...Ghiaccio, huh..."

The figure was Melone. Naturally, this wasn't his room. For his current "job," he had "kindly borrowed" this room because it had a view of the target's villa. It belonged to an employee of a Passione-affiliated casino.

Melone's bangs were slightly disheveled. Ghiaccio, seemingly unconcerned, closed the front door and spoke, "We're lucky to be born in Italy, huh... When you're able to drink wine during the day, you don't have a choice but to enjoy it, riiight?"

"...Nah, I'll pass. Now's not really the time for that," Melone responded, unimpressed.

"Boring response, but can't help it. It's been two days since you've been on the job. 'Baby Face' is a high-maintenance Stand, but don't you think this is a long hold up?"

Ghiaccio placed the paper bags on the kitchen table and started searching through the cupboard. He randomly selected a plate and cut the cheese with a knife. Without having a wine opener handy, he pried the cork open with the knife and poured the wine into an arbitrary glass.

"This 'Parmesan cheese'... it's just a cheese styled after 'Parmigiano-Reggiano', so it not being called 'Parmigiano' is alright... that's totally fine. Thanks to that, I can buy it cheaply as a snack. In fact, it actually makes the authentic 'Parmigiano-Reggiano' from Italy feel more special..."

Ghiaccio picked up a slice of cheese, placing it on his tongue to get a full taste. The unique flavor of the cheese melted on his tongue, which he then washed down with wine. The two flavors blended in his mouth, creating a unique experience — the essence of pairing a drink with a snack. As he let out a sigh with the aroma of grapes, he suddenly erupted in anger.

"BUT WHY does 'Parmesan' get paired with 'CHEESE'?! Do they think it makes sense to pronounce it 'Parmesan cheese' in English?! ARGH!!!"

As Ghiaccio aggressively grated the cheese, Melone watched him with a clear attitude of "here we go again."

"Look, Ghiaccio. Stop showing up and getting irritated out of the blue. I don't know, but... maybe it's just a French-style

pronunciation? You bought that cheese yourself, didn't you?"

"ARE THEY KIDDING ME with this name?! If it's French, why don't they call it 'Fromage'?! They might as well call it 'Parmigiano-Style Cheese' then! DAMN IT! Does everyone just MOCK the Italian language?! DAMN! DAMN! It's freaking disgusting, DAMMIT!""

"Why the hell did you come here then, huh?!"

Melone raised his voice in apparent frustration. As a member of the team, he certainly knew about Ghiaccio's "nature." Melone's excessive reactions indicated that he himself was somewhat irritated.

He glanced briefly at the terminal beside him, the 'parent' of Baby Face in the form of a computer-like device, and clicked his tongue before continuing.

"I'm busy. Really busy... I'm always busy with work, but when things are behind schedule, it's extremely busy... If you're just killing time, it'd help if you could do it somewhere else."

"I came here because I'm NOT just killing time. Right, Melone? Technically, I was supposed to do this job."

"So what, you came here to complain?"

"No, I came here to talk calmly. About 'trust'..."

Ghiaccio, having shaved the cheese into what looked like crumbs, scooped it up with his hand and, like snacking on chips, brought it to his mouth.

"We're a team. It's not an easy job, but as long as we deliver results, we're guaranteed payment. It's unbearably 'cheap' compared to freelance assassins, but... the benefit of being part of an organized team is exactly that. Of course, personally, I'd love to be entrusted with a job and nail it, making Risotto say, 'As expected of Ghiaccio, truly a reliable man'..."

As he spoke, he loudly crunched the somewhat hard cheese crumbs. His words and the sounds were not particularly pleasant to Melone, but Ghiaccio continued.

"But... if 'this job is suited for Melone', then that's how it is and *I have no problem with it*. If you nail the job, there's no disadvantage for us either... I believe that you're *capable of doing it* ... I didn't come here to hold grudges, not one bit, Melone."

"Then, seriously, why did you come? If you wish for the job to go smoothly, I'd prefer you not to interfere. Ghiaccio, you understand, right? An assassin and their target are like 'a man and woman in bed'... If someone gets involved, it complicates things."

"It's already become complicated, hasn't it? Listen, it's already been two days... The hell is going on with you? I know you aren't the type to become a spineless coward just because the target is a 'famous movie director'!"

"..."

The movie director, "Amaretti Lucano." He specialized in violent movies and had a certain "bad habit" as a creator. His works, more focused on the rawness of the violence portrayed rather than the entertainment value, were famous for being 'too real' and often modeled after real gangs and guerilla groups.

This became an issue. As a child, he lost his parents who were

caught in the middle of a gang war. Perhaps because of this, he made movies that could be seen as challenging gangs. Hiring 'detectives' and 'underground informants,' he would delve into the inner workings of gang organizations and depict them in his films... a style bordering on exposé. He even once streamed footage of 'violence' he had filmed in his movies. This wasn't a contribution to the movie's entertainment value, but rather, it seemed like he was intoxicated with pursuing edginess for its own sake.

By doing so, it was said that he was taking revenge against the 'violence' that twisted his life, a twisted obsession evident in his films...

Regardless of the truth, he was certainly poking his nose into unnecessary danger. Despite being shunned by the mainstream movie industry for such reasons, he had a cult following. That was the kind of figure he was.

"I've seen his movies too, but, man, they weren't interesting. Lacking in literary quality, or rather, it's like making movies isn't his real goal."

"His taste in movies doesn't matter, Ghiaccio. What's important is that he 'crossed the line'... and that the Boss has ordered us to 'assassinate him.'"

Indeed, Amaretti Lucano had crossed a line for Passione. Three days ago, a man thought to be a detective, who had been sniffing around Passione's casinos and their thugs, attempted to probe into the Naples prison where Polpo was incarcerated and was finally caught. After making the detective "talk" in the Passione way, it was found out that the one who had hired him was the aforementioned Amaretti Lucano. Amaretti didn't just use the detective; he cleverly used small-time thugs who were just helping out with extortion, staff from bars under the organization's influence... Basically, he was cunningly targeting the 'branches' and bribing them for 'research' purposes.

The situation of being sniffed around was alarming enough. Moreover, considering that this could be publicly broadcast in the form of a movie, it became an issue that the Boss could no longer ignore. However, if a well-known figure sniffing around Passione died in a manner that was obviously murder, it could lead to some unwanted 'extra stories' in the news. Hence, an 'assassination team'... particularly, Melone, was called in for the job because of the need to 'dispose of the body.'

"So, you understand that, and yet, Melone, why HAVEN'T you taken care of the job yet? Huh?"

"..."

"Staying silent won't help me understand, will it? Were you like this when you were scolded by teachers too? ...Just to let you know, neither I nor Risotto want to belittle you. We're actually puzzled because we rely on you. 'Baby Face' is supposed to be an invincible Stand if it's raised properly, isn't it? So, it's strange that the *target isn't dead already* ... If you're facing some 'problems,' you should be reporting them to the team."

"That's—"

Just as Melone was about to speak, a high electronic beep echoed in the quiet room. The computer terminal-like device that served as the 'parent' of Baby Face lit up its screen.

"What's that?" As Ghiaccio tilted his head, Melone pressed his hand over the bandaged part of his eye. "...It's a communication from Baby Face."

"What? So the *junior has already been born*?" Ghiaccio approached the Baby Face terminal with cheese in hand and peered at the text displayed on the screen. There was indeed a message from the

'child' of Baby Face. But reading the written words, Ghiaccio frowned involuntarily.

"...Hey. Melone... What is this thing saying? This is Baby Face? This is the communication from your Stand...?"

"...Yes. Two days ago, I already had it born from its mother... It's the junior of Baby Face."

"Your Baby Face, huh—! Isn't it supposed to become an unbeatable assassin if it's raised properly—?! Then why is it saying 'Let me repeat myself. Please refrain from foolish acts like murder'?! WHAT?!"

"..."

Feeling awkward, Melone looked away. Yes, as Ghiaccio said, Melone was facing a problem. If it was a common issue for an assassin, it might have been easy to report. But it was a problem unique to Baby Face, something hard to empathize with for other Stand users.

"It's going through a 'rebellious phase.'"

"...What? What did you just say...? Have my ears suddenly gone bad...? I thought I heard something that shouldn't make sense here."

It wasn't that he hadn't heard it. But because what he heard seemed so out of place in this context, Ghiaccio couldn't help but ask again. However, the fact was the fact. There was only one thing happening right now. So, Melone had no choice but to repeat the same line.

"...I'll repeat. Baby Face is currently in a 'rebellious phase' against me."

"Whaaaat?"

It's not unusual for Stands with their own egos to exist. Baby Face is a Stand divided into 'parent' and 'child,' and due to its nature as an automatic tracking type, the 'child' has something like an independent personality. Through the computer-type 'parent,' Melone can communicate with Baby Face. In this case, too, Melone had been communicating and managing its upbringing in this manner.

""Rebellious phase,' you mean that 'rebellious phase'? Is it that time... when a pimply-faced brat with an annoying face becomes three times more annoying? That 'rebellious phase'?"

"Exactly! That's—!" Melone raised his voice, but he was still mindful that they were currently observing the target. With a click of his tongue, he lowered his voice.

"...While taking Amaretti's blood, I chose a housekeeper who frequents his villa as the mother. The directive was to make Amaretti 'disappear' without leaving a body behind... Amaretti is 'married.' If the woman disappears with him, it'll be spun as an affair gone wrong..."

"You sure she didn't eat something weird while she was pregnant?"

"No, she was a good woman... She's the type who wouldn't eat bread dropped on the floor, even if it's 'safe within 3 seconds.'"

"You eat bread off the floor?"

"Her health was perfect, and her birthdate and blood type, as per the 'horoscope,' showed 'peggio' (worst) compatibility with Amaretti. She seemed like a woman born under a star meant to harm Amaretti.

Above all, I had a 'gut feeling' about her. "

"Then why has it turned out like this? You were raising Baby Face through that terminal as usual, right? I always found it a bit tedious, but I thought your thoroughness was one of your 'strengths.'"

"No, I was communicating properly... but... no, it's my mistake. She was indeed a good mother. Her 'health' and 'horoscope' were perfect..."

Melone glanced through binoculars at Amaretti's villa from the window and then passed them to Ghiaccio, urging him to look. Ghiaccio also peered through the binoculars. Visible through the window was the housekeeper in question.

—At first glance, it was clear she was beautiful.

Her velvety, glossy black hair was elegantly arranged, and she wore a black dress with a chic color scheme, aproned as she cleaned the living room. Her posture was as if a plank was inserted along her spine.

Her demeanor, showing responsibility and pride in her work, enhanced her outer beauty.

Just the sight of her doing housework, seen through the window frame, felt almost sacred, like an oil painting of a religious scene.

"She's a beautiful woman, isn't she!"

"Yes... a beautiful woman."

As Melone took back the binoculars, pressing his forehead, he said,

"No, she was too good... the kind who 'wouldn't hurt a fly.' On her breaks, she'd have chamomile tea with 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' or 'The Gift of the Magi,' and other times, the Bible or philosophical books. If she saw a kid in the neighborhood with a runny nose, she'd wipe it with an expensive handkerchief... Look over there."

Melone checked the woman's situation with the binoculars before passing them back to Ghiaccio.

"...Something's in the garden. What is it? That's... a stray cat. A stray cat has come, and it's injured. A dirty cat. And she, without hesitation, came out of the villa... and picked it up. She doesn't even care about getting blood on her fancy apron."

"She's probably going to treat it, right? I saw her returning a fallen bird to its nest too."

"So, she's a 'philanthropist,' huh? ... What exactly are you trying to say, huh?"

"...As the result of being raised under the influence of that woman... Baby Face has become a 'good child.'"

"WHAT THE HELL?!"

Ghiaccio reacted with obvious alarm. He hadn't expected such a situation. Melone, perhaps anticipating such a reaction, had averted his gaze.

"A difference in educational philosophy, maybe... The direction I wanted to raise it and the influence from that mother didn't mesh."

"Are we discussing marital issues now, dammit?"

"I repeat," A short electronic beep sounded again, and a message from Baby Face appeared. With seemingly perfect timing, Melone and Ghiaccio both leaned in to look at the screen.

"I love 'Mama.'"

After a beat, the two exchanged glances.

Melone, looking away almost in escape, was followed by Ghiaccio's gaze returning to the screen.

"Also, like Mama does, 'I love people.' Therefore, I don't want to kill anyone, let alone hurt Mama... Please reconsider. Quit being a gangster. I cannot like you, who orders me to hurt Mama and her master. 'Rehabilitate,' Melone."

Ghiaccio stared at Melone with eyes wide in disbelief.

Reflexively, Melone averted his eyes.

"Is this really just a 'rebellious phase'...? Maybe it's simply 'defiant' towards you, huh? Melone?"

"Shut up! He's a Mama's boy! He's already 'perfetto' (perfectly) dependent on his mother... That's why he's grown up to be defiant towards me."

"I had a feeling you were hiding something... But man, this is a shock that could knock you all the way to Catania... I never thought it would turn out that you're such a lousy father..."

"Who are you calling a lousy father?! You don't understand, raising

a child is always weird and unpredictable. Happenings like this are part of it... Still, Baby Face is a Stand that learns 'hysterical violence' from its mother to become a murderer, so it shouldn't have trouble killing the target unless they are a Stand user..."

"Yet you're already having trouble."

"Well I didn't expect such a saintly woman!"

"Then just cancel the Stand and create a new Baby Face!"

"No, this Baby Face isn't all bad."

"What do you mean?"

Melone started typing on the Baby Face terminal.

A window with the junior's specifications appeared.

"This Baby Face... its 'talents' are impeccable. It's a problem that it became a pacifist Mama's boy, but it might have the most potential for growth."

"Growth potential?"

"He may be twisted, but this one has unmatched growth in intelligence and stealth. Honestly, I want to see where this Baby Face is headed... If the education works out, he might even be capable of handling complex disguises."

Melone rambled on as he turned to Ghiaccio.

"Why do people bother with flowers when they can just hang a painting? 'Instinct.' It's because people inherently have a desire to 'nurture'... to see something grow beyond their expectations. Even I might be surpassed by his 'future'... I want to see his 'unknown potential'..."

Ghiaccio frowned.

Stands are influenced by the user's psychological growth and desires. Considering how Baby Face manifested, Melone's desire wasn't unreasonable. Still, as a teammate, Ghiaccio's 'experience' told him there was more to it.

"Is that really what you think?"

Melone, covering his uncovered eye, looked away.

"Honestly... I was sure that woman was perfect. I still can't believe I was wrong. My experience and intuition don't say I did something wrong... To admit this as a failure is to admit that my intuition as an assassin and Stand user is failing..."

His words sounded almost like a confession.

Ghiaccio, not in disgust or anger, simply readjusted his glasses.

"There's a chance, right?"

"We're making slow but steady progress in communication... Plus, Amaretti didn't return to his villa until last night. But today, that housekeeper is cleaning more vigorously..."

"Meaning?"

"Our chance is coming. If we can educate Baby Face by tonight when Amaretti returns, we can finish the job by tomorrow morning when he leaves for his main house..."

"I'm counting on you, Melone."

Ghiaccio's words carried an indescribable emotion but were spoken softly.

After fully absorbing them, Melone began communicating with Baby Face.

The lively sound of typing echoed, but Ghiaccio knew well that the force of typing doesn't strengthen the message.

Yet, Melone wanted to infuse his words with power.

"Baby Face. Listen... you were born to 'kill.' No matter the reasoning, your 'instinct' knows that. You must be getting hungry."

"If we're just talking about physical growth, that's true, but isn't real growth about developing personality, where 'instinct' is controlled by 'reason'?"

"What's with you, always spouting such sophistry! Enough alreadyyy!"

"HEY, YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY PROGRESS AT ALL!" Ghiaccio, looking at the screen, interrupted without hesitation.

"Man, this is annoying... It's like he's a kid who's read a few smart quotes and thinks he's clever."

"Don't just generalize, Ghiaccio. Raising a child should be about patience, but you're getting me riled up too."

"You might not realize it, but you seem really pissed off already."

In reality, Melone's typing had already become quite rough, but Ghiaccio didn't push further, simply showing a look of disbelief.

"Listen up, Baby Face! Your 'parent' is ultimately me! That mother was just a womb used for your birth. I'm the one who actually talked with you and taught you the basics... She never even met you or talked to you. You should be listening to me. As the most intelligent Baby Face, you should understand that."

"No, Melone." Baby Face replied firmly.

"There's a saying 'children can't choose their parents'... but fortunately, I've gained the intelligence and experience to choose the 'suitable parent' for myself. I'm truly glad to be Mama's son. Even if you erase my Stand ability and I cease to exist... it's only my 'existence' that dies. My pride as Mama's son remains alive. It's not the 'death of my soul.' Being used as a mere murder tool by you is a far more dreadful 'death of my soul'."

"....."

"Does anyone normally get talked back to by their own Stand like this?"

"Shut up already! Stop making that pitying face!"

Overwhelmed by confusion, Melone is hit with another message from Baby Face, resonating with its familiar sound. Though he didn't

want to look at the screen anymore, and least of all wanted Ghiaccio to see, they both peered at the new message together.

"I'll say it clearly, Melone. To me, only Mama is my 'parent.' My soul chose her. She makes me feel relieved. Just seeing her warm smile makes me happy... To compare, you and I are as different as the 'moon and a soft-shelled turtle.'"

"This guy... once he starts, he just goes off saying whatever he pleases... 'The moon and a soft-shelled turtle', huh?"

Melone reached for the keyboard to reply again. But then, he noticed something trembling at the edge of his vision and turned around abruptly. Ghiaccio was sweating profusely, grinding his teeth.

"..... 'The moon and a soft-shelled turtle,' huh... It's a phrase made by someone who wants to say 'they're that different'..."

"Hey, Ghiaccio."

"But normally, who compares the 'moon' with a 'soft-shelled turtle,' huh? What kind of fool compares the moon and turtles?! DAMN IT! It's frigging OBVIOUS! Anyone can see that! Even I can see that! Why the hell are you comparing it to a soft-shelled turtle? It's not like there are soft-shelled turtles everywhere! DAMN IT! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME? DAMN BRAAAT!"

"Hey, stop that. Don't bang the desk, Ghiaccio! You're only making more noise!"

"The phrase 'moon and soft-shelled turtle' means that a turtle in the mud can't normally be compared to the moon in the sky."

"Stop acting like you know it all, you brainless brat still stuck to your mother's apron strings! Then you could say 'moles' or 'worms' or 'catfish,' anything would do, damn it! What even is a 'soft-shelled turtle'? Are there that many soft-shelled turtles around? THE ONLY DAMN SLOWPOKE TURTLE HERE IS YOU!"

"Please, just be quiet for once..."

Chapter 2

In the end, although Ghiaccio's presence made things somewhat more complicated, it likely did not cause any significant change in the outcome. The night came without any results, and Amaretti returned to his villa. By tomorrow morning, Amaretti would leave the villa and return to his main house. The time limit was drawing ever closer.

"...Hey, Melone," Ghiaccio muttered, drinking wine with canned sardines. Often misunderstood due to his tendency to lose his temper at strange moments, Ghiaccio was a man who trusted his comrades and could calmly oversee the situation. Therefore, his tone was not one of jest at this critical moment. Melone, hearing his voice, understood as well.

"...We're reaching our limit. It's deviating from our orders a bit... but at this point, maybe it's better if I settle this with my 'White Album.' Preparing a new Baby Face now wouldn't be timely... You understand that, don't you?"

"...Yeah, I get it, Ghiaccio."

Resignation tends to soften a person's voice, and there was indeed a calmness in Melone's tone. Baby Face was not complying, nor was it communicating any updates on Amaretti's condition. It had even learned the concept of 'privacy.' In fact, Ghiaccio's role was to step in if Melone truly couldn't complete the task. This was both an order from Risotto and Ghiaccio's own volition. Having someone else clean up your failure is humiliating to some extent. Therefore, he thought it should at least be done by a comrade with whom he was comfortable. And Ghiaccio realized that it was finally his turn to step in.

That was the moment.

A familiar electronic beep sounded.

"Baby Face?"

Just as Melone muttered, after the sun had set, there had been no news from Baby Face, which had gone completely silent.

At this timing, could there be something Baby Face needs to convey? If it's going to preach to Melone at this point, Ghiaccio thought, it might be time to dispose of it. But the message displayed on the screen was unexpected.

"Mama has become weird."

“What...?”

Frowning, Melone reached for the keyboard. Before he could reply, another message from Baby Face arrived.

“Mama has become weird. I’m scared. I’m very scared. What should I do, Melone?”

“... Hey, what’s happening, Baby Face. Explain in detail.”

“Mama is being violent towards Amaretti!”

“What the heeeell?!”

Following Ghiaccio’s puzzled expression, Melone looked up and out the window. The light was on in a room that seemed to be the bedroom.

“Baby Face! Open the curtains in the bedroom... but do it ‘very quietly and quickly!’ Make it look like the residents forgot to close them...!”

Indeed, Baby Face perfectly executed the instruction. Its speed and precision were overwhelming, suitable for espionage, not just assassination.

Melone then peered into the bedroom using binoculars.

“...”

“What’s up, Melone. Won’t you let me see too?”

Ghiaccio almost snatched the binoculars from Melone and pressed them close against his glasses to look into the bedroom. His already small pupils shrank even more.

“...Hey, hey, hey, hey... Melone... Amaretti, he’s seriously in an ‘affair,’ isn’t he?”

“...Yeah, seems so. And it’s really deep.”

“Deep, you saaaay... Is that even really an ‘affair’...?”

Melone and Ghiaccio shared the binoculars, taking turns to watch the bedroom. There, Amaretti and the housekeeper were engaged in what could only be described as a ‘special and extremely violent affair,’ the worst possible for one’s ‘education.’

“I’m honestly shocked... I thought Amaretti made those movies out of a desire for revenge against gangs... But it’s really just his fetish.”

“A fetish?”

Ghiaccio looked as if he’d heard a ghost story.

“To be crushed in a pose like ‘Picasso’s Guernica,’ and to be ‘holding so many candles to the point where he’s like a birthday cake’... That’s a fetish?”

“Violent eroticism... ‘Masochism,’ that’s what it is. How hard-core... This has nothing to do with revenge. The guy was just excited by violence. No, what’s more surprising is that the housekeeper was ‘sadistic’... When Baby Face was implanted, she showed no such tendencies.”

"I don't get all this sadistic or masochistic stuff! Those kinds of things aren't in any 'methods' I know of!"

"If you did know about that, I'd be the one freaked out!"

"Hey, wait a sec, why is that woman holding a 'toilet brush'? What in the world is she planning to do with that 'brush'...?"

"What she's going to do with it... aren't there only so many possibilities?"

"Don't pretend like it's obvious! WHOA, THIS IS INSANE! Look at that 'bottomless swamp'! DAMN! Hey, Melone! What is this?! Why do I have to see something like this?!"

"Then just look away."

"But this 'bottomless swamp' thing, seriously? There's got to be a bottom for real, right? I mean, we're still on Earth! If it were literally bottomless, we'd end up on the other side of the planet, wouldn't we?"

Melone, ignoring Ghiaccio, focused on the messages sent by Baby Face.

"Unfathomable! Unfathomable!"

Even through the screen, it was clear that it was a half-mad scream. For Baby Face, the housekeeper must have been like a 'Holy Mother.' She raised a murderous Stand into a humanitarian logician, her 'daytime face' was wonderful, something Melone knew well from seeing it himself. But a woman's 'daytime face' and 'nighttime face' can show completely different expressions.

In the end, Melone's assessment wasn't wrong. According to the fortune-telling, she was supposed to be a woman who would harm Amaretti. But for Amaretti, who turned being harmed into pleasure, she was nothing but a good partner. Probably for her too, having a partner with whom she could fully express her violent side, their relationship with Amaretti was good. Their relationship was twisted, but the twisted aspects fit together perfectly.

However, there was no space for a 'child' like Baby Face to fit into this.

"...Face reality, Baby Face. That's the true nature of your Mama."

"Unfathomable! Unfathomable! Won't doing that kill him?!"

"It's reasonable you would think that. But people have various forms of 'love'... A smart one like you should understand that. And what do you think of such a Mama?"

"....."

"Do you hate Mama now?"

".....No. I 'love' Mama....."

"Di molto bene!"

It was a development that didn't deviate from Melone's expectations.

"You're a good child... But if that's the case, you need to learn Mama's 'expression of love.' That's her way of showing love to her dear ones... There's an expression of love in 'hurting' too. And accepting it is also an expression of love..."

"There are various ways to love. As for your own way... you can just do what your instinct dictates."

"....."

"There's no need for a child's love for their mother to be restrained by reason. So, what are you going to do?"

"I will..." Baby Face showed a moment of conflict. But it was a moment of hesitation shorter than even the panting of Amaretti Lucano.

"I will 'love' Mama!"

"Di molto bene!"

Chapter 3

Thus, the target, Amaretti Lucano, and his housekeeper were 'disposed of' without a trace. Baby Face's work was exceptionally brilliant and cunning. Following Melone's detailed instructions, it completely erased the bodies, making it look like they had eloped, taking some money and shoes with them. Melone's perceived potential had proven correct.

After a tumultuous night, both Melone and Ghiaccio emerged somewhat tired in the morning light. Having finished two days of surveillance, Melone wanted to change his clothes, while Ghiaccio, perhaps slightly hungover from drinking and getting angry, just wanted to relax. Barely tidying the room, Ghiaccio stepped outside first and immediately said to Melone:

"Keep it simple. Next time, choose a more straightforward woman as the mother, Melone. Got it!?"

"...Yeah... I'll take that to heart," Melone replied, his voice laden with the intent not to repeat the same mistake.

Ghiaccio didn't continue to reprimand him.

"But you know... Melone, after all the trouble, it turns out that Amaretti only knew low-level information. I've been thinking this for a while, but the Boss's 'secrecy' is a bit too much, huh?"

"Well, yes. Even Risotto doesn't know his face..."

"It means the Boss must have some 'secret' he really doesn't want to be known."

Still a bit tipsy, Ghiaccio exhaled a breath tinged with the scent of

grapes and continued.

"If we ever get our hands on the Boss's 'secret', all the complaints we have about our job and the way we're treated..."

"Ghiaccio," Melone interjected, his voice more serious than any other time during their noisy job.

"I know. As if I'd seriously say such a thing."

Ghiaccio awkwardly adjusted his glasses. Melone too, somewhat stiffly, looked off into the distance.

"No, I'll choose simpler and more straightforward women for the next jobs. I'll make sure things go smoothly, so you won't have to say such risky things."

Their footsteps echoed unevenly on the old iron staircase as they departed. By the time their footsteps faded, there was no trace left of the assassins' presence.

Fin.

Translated by Vish (@vishkujo)